Engaging Education: Integrating Work, Technology, and Learning for Adults

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This publication was developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist in the planning and development of Neighborhood Networks centers.

The guides in this series offer "how to" information on starting a center, creating programs and identifying center partners, marketing and media outreach, sustainability, funding, and much more.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based program established by HUD in 1995. Since then, more than 1,000 centers have opened throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These community learning centers provide residents of HUD insured and assisted properties with programs, activities and training promoting economic self-sufficiency.

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Engaging Education: Integrating Work, Technology, and Learning for Adults

Introduction

A Neighborhood Networks center is a likely place for both young and older adults to focus on career development. It is where youth can discover career choices and focus on career learning. Women re-entering the workforce can learn how to package life experience for academic credit and prepare for employment. At Neighborhood Networks centers, adults who have lost their jobs or who are looking for jobs for the first time can find and develop new skills.

Using a system of supportive services such as childcare, healthcare, transportation, and career preparation, Neighborhood Networks centers open doors of opportunity to the information age for all residents.

Along with this great new adventure comes the challenge for Neighborhood Networks directors and staff to prepare residents for a transition to work:

- How should learning be organized to help participants make a rapid and effective transition to work?
- How can the computer skills learned at the centers be seen as job-training skills and used to help residents market themselves in the information age?

This guide is for Neighborhood Networks center staff and volunteers who want to learn how centers across the country are helping adults meet workforce demands. It provides resources for workforce development programs; examples can be tailored to meet the needs of different communities.

Putting Learning in Context: Integrating Academics and Job Skills to Add Value to Work

Since the mid-1980s, research and practice in education and workplace reform have revealed the benefits of integrating academics with job-skills development. One of the findings shows that well-designed learning experiences treat participants as active learners engaged in solving real-life workplace problems.

Contextualized learning integrates academic learning with job-skills development, thereby applying what has been learned in school to solving on-the-job situations. It requires the integration of education, technical skills, knowledge, and interpersonal skills, and provides concrete applications of abstract concepts, particularly among individuals developing literacy and academic skills.

The CORD (formerly The Center for Occupational Research and Development) Web site is an excellent resource for learning more about contextual learning and for finding help in setting up a contextual learning-based training program. See their Contextual Learning Resources page (*www.cord.org/lev2.cfm/61*) and be sure to visit their *Library of the Workplace* (*http://cord.org/workplacelibrary*) to access an online resource that connects students and teachers to employees in the workforce. This page includes tools such as explanations of concepts, student activities, and concrete examples of real-life work skills that will be useful to students as well as instructors.

Contextual Learning Example

In 1999, the San Diego Housing Commission teamed with Casa Familiar, a local nonprofit organization, to increase access to computers, training, and jobs for youth in San Ysidro, a low-income community of 34,000 residents that does not have a high school or a major employer. The project encouraged youth to master word processing, spreadsheet, and other software skills in a class designed to mirror the realities of the workplace. Homeless and immigrant youth, divided into two training groups, developed initial agreements that established workplace expectations and a stipend for completing work.

The class was called an internship and leaders were called supervisors rather than teachers. Students' work was reviewed at weekly supervisory meetings and in midpoint and semester-end performance reviews. Learning projects involved publishing creative writing, developing personal budgets, doing job searches, and other relevant work using computer skills.

This learning model required a source of funding to cover stipends for successful participants. Although the initial program has now run its funding cycle, Casa Familiar continues to find the model useful. Casa Familiar staff will continue to write grant applications in 2002 for similar programs in a variety of subject areas and offer courses when funding is available.

While posing some new solutions, the opportunity to integrate academics and job-skills development also presents challenges in four key areas:

- Teaching basic workplace skills and competencies.
- Assessing the training programs that meet employer needs.
- Helping residents become more marketable in the workplace by parlaying new computer skills into employment.
- Creating projects that stimulate people to move beyond what they think they can achieve.

Teaching Basic Workplace Skills and Competencies

What are the fundamental skills and competencies needed in the workplace? Do we wait until learners have reached a certain basic skill level before placing them in job-skills development? How literate do people need to be to succeed at work? How much English do people need to know to participate in computer-based education and training? Can we develop a fast track to good jobs by integrating academic learning with job-skills development? When are Neighborhood Networks participants ready for job training?

Many participants in literacy programs cannot wait for an extended period of time before they get a job. In addition, work requirements imposed by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 make it even more difficult to participate in course work that requires a lot of time before completion.

The SCANS Response

In 1991, the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL's) Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) identified basic competencies, skills, and qualities required by all young people to meet the demands of America's workplaces. A broad base of support for SCANS helped it become the foundation for work preparation programs in the United States.

Putting SCANS to Work

SCANS has been integrated into education and training curricula to help learners get on a fast track to work by developing basic employability skills. The National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) supports the concept of certifying employability skills, such as teamwork, problemsolving, and decisionmaking. The National Institute for Literacy uses similar skills to define what adults need to know to carry out their life roles successfully. School systems at the state and local levels, as well as community colleges, are integrating SCANS skills into their curricula.

For example, Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century requires all school districts to provide students with an opportunity to earn the Certificate of Advanced Mastery by 2004–05. This certificate program defines career-related learning standards that focus on personal management, problemsolving, teamwork, communication, organizations and systems, employment foundations, and career development. Students are expected to achieve these skill levels through integrated curricula and community-based experiences.

The Five Competencies of SCANS

1. **Resources:** Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources.
   - *Time:* Selects and ranks goal-relevant activities, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules.
   - *Money:* Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes adjustments to meet objectives.
   - *Material and facilities:* Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or space efficiently.
   - *Human resources:* Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance, and provides feedback.

2. **Interpersonal:** Works with others.
   - *Participates as a member of a team:* Contributes to group effort.
   - *Teaches:* Mentors other staff members and teaches them new skills.
   - *Serves clients/customers:* Works to satisfy customers' expectations.
   - *Exercises leadership:* Communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, and responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies.
   - *Negotiates:* Works toward agreements involving exchange of resources and resolves divergent interests.
   - *Works with diversity:* Works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds.

3. **Information:** Acquires and uses information.
   - Acquires and evaluates information.
   - Organizes and maintains information.
   - Interprets and communicates information.
   - Uses computers to process information.

4. **Systems:** Understands complex interrelationships.
   - *Understands systems:* Knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them.
   - *Monitors and corrects performance:* Distinguishes trends, predicts impacts on system operations, diagnoses deviations in system performance, and corrects malfunctions.
   - *Improves or designs systems:* Suggests modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance.

5. **Technology:** Works with a variety of technologies.
   - *Selects technology:* Chooses procedures, tools, or equipment, including computers and related technologies.
   - *Applies technology to task:* Understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment.
   - *Maintains and troubleshoots equipment:* Prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies.

(U.S. Department of Labor, 1991)

SCANS: A Three-Part Foundation

1. Basic Skills: Reads, writes, listens, speaks, and performs arithmetic and mathematical operations.

- *Reading:* Locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, graphs, and schedules.
- *Writing:* Communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing, and creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts.
- *Arithmetic/mathematics:* Performs basic computations and approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques.
- *Listening:* Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues.
- *Speaking:* Organizes ideas and communicates orally.

2. Thinking Skills: Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reasons.

- *Creative thinking:* Generates new ideas.
- *Decisionmaking:* Specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternatives.
- *Problemsolving:* Recognizes problems, and devises and implements plan of action.
- *Seeing things in the mind's eye:* Organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information.
- *Knowing how to learn:* Uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills.
- *Reasoning:* Discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it when solving a problem.

3. Personal Qualities: Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, and honesty.

- *Responsibility:* Exerts a high level of effort and perseveres toward goal attainment.
- *Self-esteem:* Believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self.
- *Sociability:* Demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in group settings.
- *Self-management:* Assesses self accurately, sets personal goals, monitors progress, and exhibits self-control.
- *Integrity/honesty:* Chooses ethical courses of action.

(U.S. Department of Labor, 1991)

Integrating SCANS Into Training

The following steps can be helpful to Neighborhood Networks centers that want to integrate SCANS into training programs.

- Develop a simple checklist and assess participant skills and knowledge related to SCANS skills. Initial screening can be conducted during class discussions by asking participants to provide examples of how they have demonstrated these skills in the past and which skills have been most challenging for them to develop.
- Develop an Individualized Learning Plan. After an informal assessment, have each participant complete the plan, identifying specific SCANS skills to be developed throughout the training. The plan should include a section where participants can self-assess their progress throughout the training program.
- Develop a chart that integrates SCANS with existing training curricula. Identify which SCANS skills are strongly represented in your curricula, which SCANS skills need to be included more, and which are missing.
- Add activities that include missing and underrepresented SCANS skills. Create opportunities for participants to practice SCANS as they develop technical and academic skills. An effective method for training in SCANS skills is to present workplace problems to be solved by using case studies and examples drawn from the workplace experiences of participants.
- Include instructional strategies that encourage participants to practice specific SCANS skills. Participants can do this while discussing employment, practicing technical skills, performing tasks, preparing for interviews and internships, and debriefing from work site experiences.
- Ask participants to report their progress in developing SCANS skills. Use your assessment checklist to measure progress.
- Once you have a bank of SCANS-related activities and instructional strategies, customize your training to meet the needs of individual participants.

Many commercial curriculum and assessment products are available to help educators and trainers assess participants in SCANS skills. A good resource is the SCANS 2000 Workforce Skills Web site at Johns Hopkins University (*www.scans.jhu.edu*).

Assessing Training Programs That Meet Employer Needs

Neighborhood Networks staff will find that knowing how to develop skills-training programs that meet the needs and standards of industries and employers and knowing how to integrate those standards into education and training courses to prepare people for work can be useful in identifying job-skills training programs and selecting curricula.

These steps should be followed once a training program has been identified:

- Do a Web search to locate skill standards for your program areas, starting with the NSSB Web site at *www.nssb.org.* This Web site provides news, information about skill standards initiatives and new partnerships, and links to projects and state skill standards activities.
- Using skill standards as a framework, talk to local employers about the skills and knowledge they want from their employees.
- Work with local employers to identify the level of knowledge and skills required for entry-level work.
- Monitor and record learner progress.
- Review progress frequently with learners and use progress reports in mock interviews.
- Include the list of foundation technical skills as a way to obtain feedback from supervisors once learners are placed in jobs.

Helping Residents Become Marketable in the Workplace

Computer skills have become an essential basic skill of the information age and a marketable asset for people seeking employment.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that computer and data processing services will be the fastest-growing employment sector in the economy between 2000 and 2010, both in percentage and in total number of jobs. Employment in this industry, which provides prepackaged and specialized software, data and computer systems design and management, and computer-related consulting services, is projected to grow by 86 percent and increase by 1.8 million jobs during the decade. The seven fastest-growing occupations in terms of projected percentage growth in employment will be computer software engineers, computer support specialists, computer and systems software engineers, network and computer systems administrators, network systems and data communications analysts, desktop publishers, and database administrators. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002–03 *Occupational Outlook Handbook, www.bls.gov/news.release/ooh.toc.htm*).

Furthermore, many jobs outside the computer industry increasingly require computer skills. In 2000, U.S. employers needed roughly 1.6 million new information technology (IT) workers, according to a study by the Information Technology Association of America. Neil Evans, executive director of the National Workforce Center for Emerging Technologies (NWCET), in Bellevue, Washington, says that in the future, everyone in America will be an information worker (see page 1 of the PDF of NWCET's 1999–2000 Annual Report at *www.nwcet.org/page.asp?view=48#*).

Technological advancement presents challenges to Neighborhood Networks centers, including how to:

- Channel various computer-based activities into a well-focused job-skills development program that provides residents with new opportunities for highly skilled, well-paid, high technology jobs.
- Provide coordinated programs and support services to help residents develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to make a smooth transition into jobs requiring computer skills.

In addition, there are an incalculable number of jobs in almost all industries that require computer proficiency.

Working with industry partners, NWCET developed skill standards, or criteria, for what people must know and be able to do. The latest edition, *Skill Standards for Information Technology, Millennium Edition,* describes what IT professionals do in eight career clusters:

- Database development and administration.
- Digital media.
- Enterprise systems analysis and integration.
- Network design and administration.
- Programming/software engineering.
- Technical support.
- Technical writing.
- Web development and administration.

For short-term training programs, specialists at NWCET are creating modular, competency-based core curricula based on these skill standards. The core curriculum modules can be used as building blocks to design customized IT courses or as short-term training programs to prepare people for jobs in local businesses and industries that require IT skills. Neighborhood Networks centers can use these core IT standards to customize training and design short-term training programs.

Modules can be used as curriculum for short-term training or daylong workshops for students, parents, and community members to explore IT careers. Single modules used as "just-in-time" projects can meet the immediate needs of learners in drop-in centers. Modules can become supportive learning activities for the General Equivalency Degree, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and other education programs that use the computer as a tool, such as the Internet module.

Core Curriculum	
IT Skills/Knowledge	**Foundation Skills**
Computer trends in business and society	Analysis
Database	Design/development
E-mail	Documentation and business communication
Graphics software	Facilitation/customer service
Hardware installation and configuration	Organization/delivery of presentations
Internet	Problemsolving/troubleshooting
Network technologies	Project management
PC principles and operations	Research
Presentation software	Self-learning
Programming	Teamwork
Software installation and configuration	Testing/validation
Spreadsheet	Workplace skills
Windows	
Word processing	

Making Skills Employer-Friendly

NWCET and the Net Day Compass offer tools and publications that Neighborhood Networks centers can use to find or develop standards and curricula customized to local needs. These tools can also help train Neighborhood Networks center staff to design programs, use curriculum modules, and record and report learner progress. You can find Net Day Compass on the Web at *www.netdaycompass.org/index.cfm.*

Presenting IT skill progress in a language recognized by employers is very important. This places great value on the type of learner progress records kept by instructors. A sample Progress Recording Tool appears in appendix A of this guide. Instructors can use this tool to record the skills and knowledge acquired by participants in the wide variety of computer-based activities offered at Neighborhood Networks centers. Instructors can keep an ongoing record in a central file, marking progress on each skill and using this tool to assess IT skills and knowledge developed by participants. A participant can present his or her IT progress chart to a prospective employer and discuss it at job interviews.

Creating Projects That Stimulate People to Move Beyond

When projects are connected to the real needs and interests of participants, they increase motivation and engagement and give people a reason to learn.

Learning involving a specific project or problem gives participants more control over their own activities (since they choose the project, resources, and activities) and provides them with the opportunity to explore their interests, skills, and abilities. Projects allow participants to build teamwork skills, connect their skills and interests to the needs of others in their communities, and see the value of their contributions.

Putting the Concept to Work

In schools where project learning is gaining support, learners thrive in courses where concepts are aligned with their intended use.

Students learn more effectively and are more motivated when activities are directly related to the real world than when they are involved in traditional academic tasks. Projects also promote cooperative learning and team building. Participants use their skills in different ways as they take on different roles within groups and explore new social relationships with peers.

By focusing on projects that have an objective, youth at Casa Familiar in San Diego (*www.Casafamiliar.org*) have more choices and creative control. Their most successful project was the participant-led publication of an anthology of creative writing. Other projects included creating an online help desk for software users and a personal budget project in which youth assessed the real costs of their lifestyle choices.

Shifting to portfolios was key to promoting project learning at the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts. Portfolios contain certificates, diplomas, and examples of work that demonstrated learners' skills development and knowledge acquisition. This motivated learners to produce real-world products to include in their portfolios. Their first projects were scenarios and *in-basket activities* selected from textbooks. In-basket activities are simulations that place the learner in a situation where he or she takes on the role of a worker and completes a real-world activity. An example of a word processing in-basket activity might look like this: "You are Alphonse from the ABD Corporation. One of your tasks today is to word process and send the following letter to customers. Copy the letter out of the book; word process using Microsoft Word."

Youth then move on to real projects and meet the needs of real people. Learners work in teams, thereby learning and coaching each other. They learn to interact with the people for whom they are doing a real-world task. Learners in the office skills class transferred Urban League by-laws into electronic format; in the public relations project, learners worked with the public relations officer to design and create a monthly newsletter that summarizes program highlights. The first newsletter created in the class became a template for subsequent issues.

To view current employment training programs at the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, visit their Web site at *www.ulem.org/get_to_work.htm.*

In Massachusetts, Chelsea High School students developed marketable skills using Geographic Information Systems software on a project to help their city meet federal emergency preparedness guidelines. During the course of a year, students learned about using computers to map information using Windows 95 and ArcView 3.0; they also learned about regulations and safeguards governing hazardous materials from local businesses and government agencies.

Students canvassed the community for floor plans, material safety data sheets, evacuation routes, lists of contact people responsible for storing hazardous materials, and lists of other businesses and community organizations. They compiled data on what was stored at which sites, identified one- and two-way streets, and plotted Chelsea's hazardous materials information. At the end of the project, students directed an emergency response to a simulated chemical plant release. Students coordinated an evacuation of the areas using air-monitoring instruments borrowed from the Environmental Protection Agency and Computer Aided Management of Emergency Operations, a software package program run on laptops.

Appendix A: NWCET Information Technology Skill Standards Learner Progress Chart (Sample)

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PROGRAM: _____

LEARNER PROGRAM OUTCOMES **Student ability to demonstrate:**	**Introduced**	**Practiced**	**Mastered**
COMPUTER TRENDS IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY • How IT impacts the operation and management of business and society. • Past and current trends in computer technology.			
DATABASE • Ability to design, create, modify, and use relations databases, including developing queries, forms, and reports. • Ability to apply databases to actual situations and business problems.			
E-MAIL • Basic understanding of e-mail system components and organization. • Ability to use e-mail effectively and appropriately. • Ability to use basic e-mail functions and tools.			
GRAPHICS SOFTWARE • Knowledge of available graphics software applications. • Ability to apply basic principles of visual communication in transferring data into graphics form. • Ability to create simple graphics documents using drawing and painting software programs.			
HARDWARE INSTALLATION/CONFIGURATION • Knowledge of individual parts that make up a stand-alone PC computer system and the relationships between components. • Ability to install and configure hardware in a PC computer system. • Basic knowledge of PC hardware troubleshooting and maintenance.			
INTERNET • Ability to use the Internet as a research tool in a highly efficient manner. • Ability to create and maintain Web pages.			
NETWORK TECHNOLOGIES • An understanding of overall design and components of a LAN and WAN system. • Ability to perform basic setup and configuration of network hardware and software. • Ability to monitor overall network operations, troubleshoot basic problems, and implement administrative functions.			
PC PRINCIPLES and OPERATIONS • Knowledge and understanding of the primary PC components. • Ability to perform basic personal computer operations.			
PRESENTATION SOFTWARE • Ability to use the components of presentation software creatively and effectively. • Proficiency in using presentation software functions.			

Appendix B: Resources

Organizations

Center for Education, Employment and Community at Education Development Center, Inc.

www.edc.org/CEEC

The Center for Education, Employment, and Community (CEEC) at Education Development Center (EDC) works for the economic, educational, and social well being of all people. Bringing together people with diverse talents and backgrounds, CEEC explores ideas and creates inclusive systems that:

- Help all learners achieve to high standards.
- Prepare workers to enter and advance in their careers.
- Build people's capacity to improve their communities.

Key guiding principles include:

- Equity and excellence are inseparable.
- Diversity is a strength.
- Technology supports human development; used well, it can improve our ability to learn and to work.
- Practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and the public must contribute to solutions.
- Meaningful, enduring, and high-quality outcomes require new models of collaboration.

Current projects include bridging the digital divide, promoting gender equity, nurturing the next generation of leaders, crafting innovative approaches for school improvement, educating the workforce, and community building.

Center on Education and Work

www.cew.wisc.edu

The center's work enables educators to engage youth and adults in learning and career development experiences that lead to meaningful and productive careers. Toward that end, the center undertakes research, development, and capacity-building technical assistance activities to strengthen the connections among educational institutions, workplaces, communities, and families. The center's efforts are ultimately designed to enhance the quality of career-related learning in schools, colleges, and the workplace for all individuals.

Community Technology Centers' Network (CTCNet)

www.ctcnet.org

CTCNet is a network of more than 600 independent nonprofit community technology centers, mostly located in low-income communities. People can access computers and computer-related technology, such as the Internet. The sites are enormously diverse in program areas and participating populations. Some are stand-alone centers; others operate as part of a larger organization, such as a multiservice agency, museum, job-training center, shelter, or cable public access center. Most include programs where participants can learn important job skills either via formal training programs or through using the technology to accomplish projects in a learning environment that encourages exploration and discovery. The CTCNet Web site includes a Center Start Up Manual and research/evaluation studies examining the impacts of community technology centers on their participants and communities.

Colorado Service Learning
www.colorado.edu/servicelearning

On the CSL Web site students learn and develop through thoughtfully-organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community and is coordinated with an institution of higher education, and with the community; helps foster civic responsibility; is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students enrolled; and includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience.

CORD
www.cord.org

CORD (formerly the Center for Occupational Research and Development) is a national nonprofit organization that provides innovative changes in education to prepare students for greater success in both higher education and careers. CORD assists educators in secondary schools and colleges through new curricula, teaching strategies, professional development, and partnerships with community leaders, families, and employers. CORD's initiatives include curriculum design, developing new learning tools, delivering professional development, creating applications of educational technology, and conducting educational research and evaluation.

CORD is committed to supporting educators who use contextual teaching strategies. The Contextual Learning Resources section of CORD Online (*www.cord.org/lev1.cfm/6*) offers general information about contextual teaching and learning, the Contextual Teaching Network, CORD's contextual academic courses, teaching resources such as project-based learning ideas and extension activities, and listservs.

Information Technology Association of America Website: The Techforce Initiative
www.itaa.org

With 2001 spending over $800 billion, information technology (IT) is one of America's fastest growing industries, encompassing computers, software, telecommunications products and services, Internet and online services, systems integration, and professional services companies. Located just across the river from the nation's capital in Arlington, Virginia, Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) is the only trade association representing the broad spectrum of the world-leading U.S. IT industry.

The ITAA Web site provides information about the IT industry, issues, association programs, publications, meetings, seminars, and more. It also provides links to other valuable Web sites. The ITAA home page can be your best stop on the Internet for industry news and perspective. It is also a great way to get to know ITAA and its many valuable programs.

For more information, visit ITTA's home page and explore the links under "Programs." In particular, be sure to click on ITAA Workforce Mission, Digital Opportunity Initiative, The Techforce Initiative, and Building Linkages.

Institute on Education and the Economy
www.tc.columbia.edu/~iee/

The Institute on Education and the Economy (IEE), established in 1986 by the board of trustees of Teachers College, Columbia University, is an interdisciplinary policy research center that focuses on the interaction between education and the economy. It facilitates communication between education and business in the belief that long-term solutions to human resource problems require collaboration. The institute helps businesses articulate workforce problems to educators and policy leaders and works with educators to involve employers in school-to-work transition and other educational programs.

The National Alliance of Business
www.nab.com

In an increasingly knowledge-based society, education is vital to success for every individual. The National Alliance of Business (NAB) spearheads the corporate community's efforts to increase achievement at all levels of learning. To meet this goal, NAB, along with the business community it represents, partners with policymakers and educators to raise public awareness, inform policy, and stimulate action.

By focusing public attention and discourse on improving education systems, impacting public policy, and partnering with educators in communities across the country to stimulate action, corporate leaders will ensure education is a national priority. NAB is the voice of business in this effort.

NAB coalesces and leverages business leadership to:

- Increase the academic achievement of every American child.
- Ensure students have opportunities to experience and/or understand the linkage between academic success and success beyond school.
- Promote a workforce development system centered on lifelong learning.

Along with ITAA and EDC, NAB is more than 2 years into the Techforce Initiative, a national effort to promote and expand IT employer involvement in school-to-careers. Leadership teams of IT employers and educators have convened to provide overall guidance. A network of Centers of Excellence is providing lessons for expanding IT employer involvement. This year, the initiative is focusing on supporting communities as they create sustainable and scaleable systems for IT. Seminars will be held across the country; policy reports and practical toolkits will be prepared.

National Skill Standards Board
www.nssb.org

Created in 1994, the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) is an unprecedented coalition of leaders from business, labor, employee, education, and community and civil rights organizations that aims to create a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment, and certification systems to enhance the ability of the U.S. workforce to compete effectively in a global economy. These skills are being identified by industry in full partnership with labor, civil rights, and community-based organizations. The standards will be based on high-performance work and will be portable across industry sectors.

Members from each industry sector come together to form voluntary partnerships, which, under the guidance of NSSB, are responsible for developing skill standards, assessments, and certification for their respective industry sectors. Industry skill standards have been completed in the manufacturing and the sales and service industry sectors.

The NSSB Web site offers news, publications, links to a number of standards systems, and a database designed to be your comprehensive source for current national and international literature regarding skill standards and skill standards systems.

SCANS 2000 The Workforce Skills Web site
www.scans.jhu.edu/NS/HTML/Index.htm

The SCANS 2000 Center is comprised of an interdisciplinary research group at the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies. The staff of SCANS 2000 is working on projects related to creating a Career Transcription System. The components of this system include school-to-work, welfare-to-work, incumbent workers, and education reform. The central theme in the center's work is creating a workforce development system that properly prepares workers to compete in the international economy of the 21st century.

The center's purpose is to provide information and recommendations about teaching the SCANS skills and encouraging lifelong learning. The SCANS Web site provides examples from projects in classrooms and workplaces.

Neighborhood Networks Information

For more information about Neighborhood Networks, visit the Web site at *www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org* or contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312–2743, or TTY at (800) 483–2209. The Web site contains valuable information for centers including:

Databases

- **Centers**
  Information about operating centers and those in planning stages. Neighborhood Networks centers across the United States are listed geographically by state.

- **News**
  Articles, press releases, success stories, and grand openings relevant to Neighborhood Networks.

- **Properties**
  Information about Neighborhood Networks properties, listed geographically by state.

- **Resources**
  Information about funding, technical assistance, publications, and Web site resources.

Lists

- **Conferences**
  Calendar of conferences and training events.

- **Consortia**
  List of Neighborhood Networks consortia.

- **Coordinators**
  List of Neighborhood Networks coordinators.

- **Resident Associations**
  List of Neighborhood Networks properties with active resident associations.

- **Senior Properties**
  List of senior properties with operational Neighborhood Networks centers.

Online Networking
Talk with Neighborhood Networks staff and stakeholders via online networking.

Publications

- **Fact sheets.** Fact sheets are one-page summaries of various topics relevant to the operations of Neighborhood Network centers. Fact sheets currently available include an overview of the initiative, telehealth programs, health information, health partnerships, childcare, transportation, seniors, and community improvements at Neighborhood Network centers.

- ***Network News*** (current and past issues). A quarterly newsletter that highlights national achievements for a wide audience, including partners and the public.

- ***NNewsline*** (current and past issues). A quarterly newsletter that highlights topics of interest to Neighborhood Networks centers and coordinators.